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CITY MANAGER



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August 15, 2016

NEWS RELEASE

First travel-related case of Zika confirmed in El Paso

Case serves as a reminder to prevent mosquito bites, breeding

EL PASO, Texas—The City of El Paso Department of Public Health (DPH) announced today the confirmation of the first travel-related case of Zika virus in the area. A man tested positive for the virus following travel to an area where active mosquito transmission of Zika is currently taking place and travel advisories have been issued.

"The patient provided blood and urine samples which were tested and came back positive. What we know is that this individual is recovering and is not considered a threat to the community," said Robert Resendes, Public Health Director. "What we need is the community to take note that Zika virus is real, and we must protect ourselves and the community."

The mosquito-borne virus has caused the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to issue travel warnings for pregnant women. The DPH is also encouraging anyone who may be traveling to Zika-affected regions including certain areas of Florida, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Pacific Islands, and U.S. territories to take strict precautions against being bitten by mosquitoes.

Because Zika can also be transmitted sexually, pregnant women with a male partner who travels to a Zika-affected area should either abstain from sexual activity, or use condoms correctly and consistently for the duration of their pregnancy to protect the unborn fetus from the risk of severe birth defects, including microcephaly. Additionally, non-pregnant women of childbearing age who travel, or who have a male partner that travels, to a Zika-affected region, should talk with their healthcare providers about their pregnancy plans and take steps to avoid any unintended pregnancy, including correct and consistent condom use.

According to the Department of State Health Services, there are 108 reported cases of Zika virus disease in Texas.

Efforts to combat the Zika virus and the mosquitoes that transmit the disease began locally in February after an outbreak was detected in Brazil. On May 9 the DPH convened a stakeholders meeting with key officials in public health and other related fields. Contact with these groups continues as the threat of local transmission remains a possibility.

The DPH has provided thousands of informational materials both in print and online to key stakeholders including doctor's offices, recreation centers, and through our clinical venues. These materials continue to be made available and are updated on the webpage located at: <http://www.elpasotexas.gov/public-health/current-events/zika-virus-page>. We continue to offer educational presentations to local groups through

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Promote Transparent and Consistent Communication Among All Members of the Community

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our Speakers Bureau and invite all members of the community to share our social media posts via Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/EP-Public-Health-101891923185094/>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/eppublichealth>), as well as public service announcements via the City's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofelpasotx>).

In addition to the educational efforts, DPH will be purchasing 5,000 Zika prevention kits. These kits, which include a can of mosquito repellent, will be distributed to pregnant and child bearing age women participating in the WIC program as well as those living in the colonias.

In regards to mosquito control, the Vector Control Program of the City's Environmental Services Department continues to actively treat areas throughout the region and monitor for mosquitoes. This includes numerous fogging events throughout the county twice a week. Monitoring efforts included the trapping and testing of more than two dozen mosquito traps. This allows the City to closely monitor mosquito activity in our region. Other efforts include inspecting and treating any stagnant water, which includes checking vacant houses with pools and those without pools. To report standing water or other mosquito breeding sites, please call 3-1-1.

Zika virus is a generally mild illness that is spread primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. Common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes), lasting from several days to one week. The following prevention methods are highly encouraged:

- Apply EPA-approved insect repellent. (Follow manufacturer's instructions)
- Wear pants and long-sleeve shirts that cover exposed skin. In warmer weather, wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing that covers exposed skin.
- Use screens or close windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- "Tip and Toss" - Remove standing water in and around the home. This includes water in cans, toys, tires, plant saucers, and any container that can hold water.
- Cover trash cans or containers where water can collect.
- To avoid infecting local mosquitoes, people who travel to areas with active Zika transmission should apply insect repellent every time they go outside for at least three weeks after they return to Texas – and longer if they develop an illness that could be Zika.

The mission of the Department of Public Health is to provide research and evaluation, prevention, intervention, and mobilization services to the people of El Paso so they can be healthy, productive, safe, and secure. For more information on the programs and services offered by the Department of Public Health, visit EPHealth.com or dial 2-1-1.

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